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Some cases of emotional maladjustment and underachievement have been a result of poor student placement with certain types of teachers. If students and teachers could be tested through the use of a flexibility-rigidity score, their behavioral characteristics could be matched and the classroom environment improved. Flexibility, in a classroom environment, is the ability to adjust rapidly to changing conditions; rigidity is a form of negative transfer. Experimental tests could be administered to sixth-grade students and seventh-grade teachers to properly place the students in the seventh grade.

The tests would utilize subject matter rules to solve problems, and norms of flexibility-rigidity would be established. Some of the problems on the tests could be solved if the rules were not applied; the persons who did apply rules to these problems would be exhibiting rigid behavior. An experimental classroom could be established. The upper and lower 20 percent of the pupils, as measured by the flexibility-rigidity norms, would be assigned to the teachers receiving corresponding scores.

A prognostic instrument would be developed as a result of the proposed experiment. Pupil placement would become more logical, and cases of underachievement and/or emotional maladjustment would be corrected. A bibliography of references is given.

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STUDENT PLACEMENT BY MEANS OF A FLEXIBILITY-RIGIDITY SCORE, A DESIGN

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Introduction

At the junior high school level oftentimes a sixth grade teacher will ask a counselor to place a pupil with either a control-type (rigid) teacher or a democratic (flexible) type teacher, to best meet the needs of a pupil entering into the seventh grade. To the best of the counselors' ability, this is usually accomplished. However if it is true that some pupils seem to function best under certain types of teachers and vice-versa, then some means of measurement should be available to identify this personality characteristic in both pupils and teachers.

I should like to postulate an idea whereby we can better place pupils in junior high school. I believe that proper placement is more essential in a six-six grade system, so my concern in this paper is the transition between grades six and seven, with emphasis on better placement in grade seven. I hope to establish my point by utilizing a flexibility-rigidity score.

Some research has been done in the field of flexibility-rigidity since 1950, but much of this work has been done with institutionalized personnel and consequently offers little help here. Nevertheless, the work of the authors listed in the bibliography on page 6 has been of considerable help to me in formulating this paper.

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Results of reading these references lead one to think that if the proper measurements were used, mainly the Luchin Jar Test, that implications could reach far into the field of educational placement in grade seven. However, I should like to initiate another experimental design in this paper.

Rationale

Many educators have expressed the belief that numerous cases of emotional maladjustment have been due to misplacement. They also state the belief that under-achievement is oftentimes the result of such misplacement. To combat the forenamed problems, educators have attempted student groupings mainly by means of I.Q. and achievement scores. I believe that the classroom environment can be greatly enhanced by matching the behavioral characteristics of teachers to the behavioral characteristics of their pupils. Groupings conducted on the basis of flexibility-rigidity would partially correct personality factors. On the strength of the argument that personality factors are more important in pupil grouping than I.Q. and achievement scores, it is my contention that greater success will accompany a school system which utilizes flexibility-rigidity scores for grouping purposes than one which uses groupings based on I.Q. and achievement scores.

To state the proposal more simply; it is my premise that if a student who rates high in flexibility is taught by a teacher who rates high in rigidity, a problem of emotional maladjustment or under-achievement is likely to result. Conversely, if a student who rates high in rigidity is placed under the tutorage of a flexible instructor the same problems of emotional maladjustment and/or under-achievement are likely to be displayed. Therefore, it is quite evident that a rigid teacher is not necessarily a "bad" teacher, or a flexible teacher necessarily a "good" teacher. A flexible teacher will apparently be the best type of teacher for certain types of students, while a rigid teacher will be of greater assistance to other types of students.

Definition of Terms

Flexibility, in a classroom environment, may be defined as being the ability to adjust rapidly to changing conditions; or, more simply, to solve concrete and abstract problems when the problematic conditions are varied. Rigidity, on the other hand, may be thought of as a type of negative transfer. It may be considered to be a behavioral characteristic which would compel a person to apply a previously learned rule or course of action to an environmental situation which would necessitate a novel solution.

Tentative Experimental Design

If rigidity is accepted as negative transfer, then subject matter rules may be used in developing measures of this factor. The first step in this tentative experiment would be to combine subject matter rules in such a way that a student would be presented with a number of problems in which application of rules would lead to successful completion of the problems presented. However, some problems would be presented which would be solved only if the rules were not applied. These problems would be based on the "exceptions to the rules" which are common to our various school subjects. It is evident that a person who applied the rules to this last

category of problems would be exhibiting rigid behavior in regards to the "non-rule" problems. A frequency count, when applied to a series of "rule" and "non-rule" problems, would permit the tester to establish norms of flexibility-rigidity. As the pupils taking these tests reached a significant number, a flexibility-rigidity score could be developed for each pupil.

The second step of the experimental program would be to set up a group of tests, for use with the teachers, similar to those used with the pupils. Norms would again be established, and a flexibility-rigidity score would once more be determined.

The third, and final phase of this experiment would be that of setting up a classical experiment. The upper and lower twenty per cent of the pupils as measured by the flexibility-rigidity continuum, would then be assigned to the teachers receiving scores which fell in the upper and lower twenty per cent of the Flexibility-Rigidity Continuum. The pupils could be divided into control and experimental groups on the basis of I.Q. scores, achievement scores, sex, age, and socio-economic level. The variables of classroom environment, classroom subject matter covered, teacher-made tests, and the teacher could easily be controlled.

To evaluate the above design, the modified Luchin's Water Jar Test could be administered to the extreme upper and lower twenty per cent of the pupils.

Anticipated Results

It is hypothesized that a prognostic instrument would be developed as a result of the proposed experiment. The ability to predict flexibility-rigidity behavioral patterns, in turn, would lead to the enactment of a much more logical and enlightened means of pupil placement. Finally, many cases of pupil under-achievement and/or emotional maladjustment would be corrected.

Implementation

1. Obtain permission from the superintendent of schools to administer experiment.

2. Enlist cooperation of school principals and counselors.

3. Ask elementary and high school teachers to submit rules in his or her subject area that bring about negative transfer.

4. Formulate problem-solving flexibility-rigidity test for pupils in grade six and administer during first semester of school year.

5. Evaluate results and identify with both extremes.

6. Structure problem solving test for seventh grade teachers to determine flexibility-rigidity score. Evaluate and identify.

7. Place pupils according to flexibility-rigidity scores with teachers of like scores.

8. Compare quarter grades of pupils with another high school not using flexibility-rigidity placement.

9. Evaluate adjustment with sixth grade teacher after the first semester.

10. Evaluate with staff, superintendent and counselors and begin long term study.

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